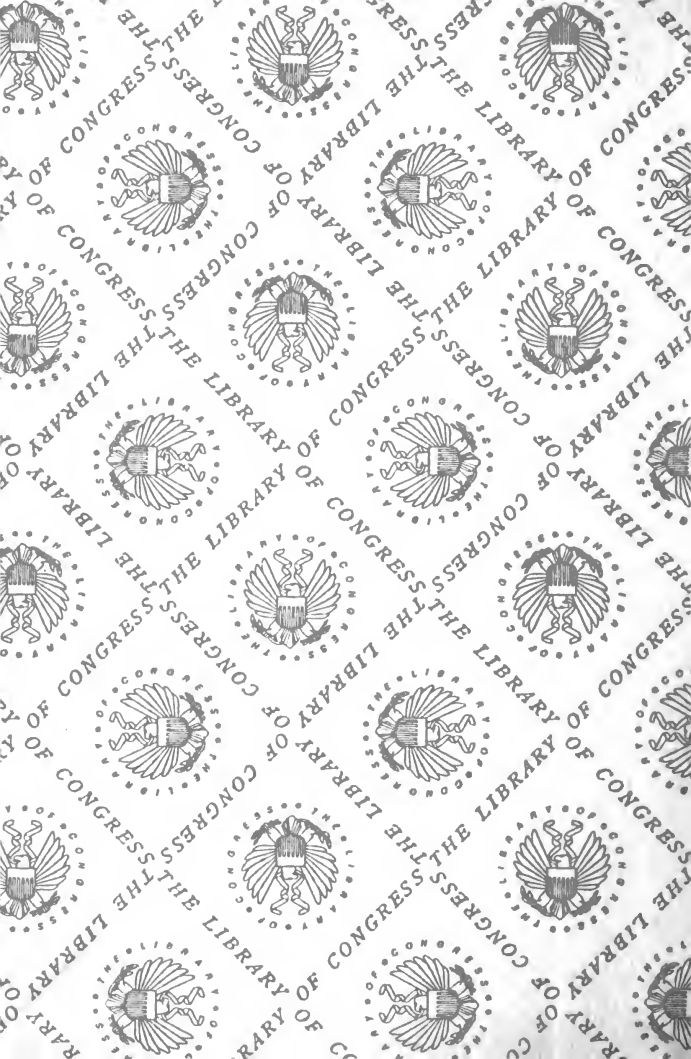
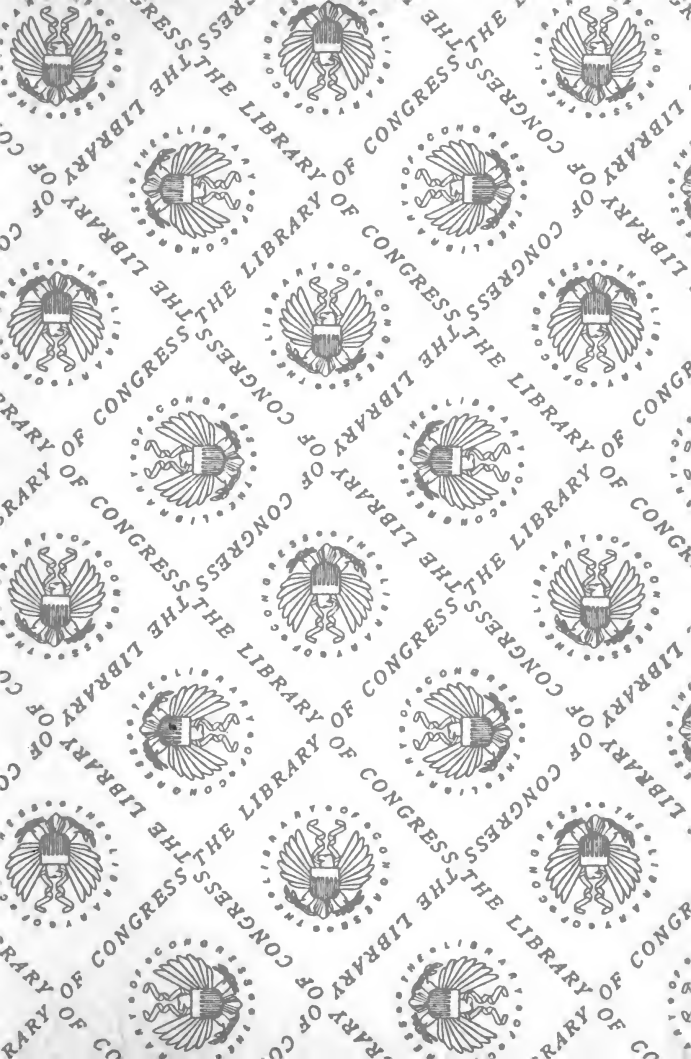


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Rude Rural Rhymes

Bob Adams

Robert Merrill Adams

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Dedicated to
Hannah
who has a sense
of Humor



Rude Rural Rhymes

Being A Boy

You know the Quaker poet writes of barefoot boys and their delights, of barefoot boys with cheek of tan and summer hills o'er which they ran—attractive pictures for the jaded, in rural rhymes that have mine faded; but of their truth I'm not persuaded. If at my side some potent fairy, with wings and wand both waving airy, should stop and offer me the joys which appertain to barefoot boys, I'd say "What mischief are you brewing? Don't vamp me, dear; there's nothing doing. Go off and tempt some other man to be a boy with cheek of tan." My tan was localized in speckles; I was a boy with cheek of freckles, legs scratched with thorns and stuck with stubble and bruised with stones and other rubble. I had no money when I would have. I had no hanky when I should have. I loved the pretty school marm misses, but primer kids got all the kisses, or grown up lads who had the pluck; and half grown boys were out of luck. Too many rocks waylaid my toe; the new nails took too long to grow. The thorns of life too often would prick me, too many jackknives used to nick me, too many other boys could lick me. Too many bosses kept me harried; I have but one since I got married.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Graduates

O where are now the graduates who left in June the college gates in fifties and in forty-eights, and those that swarmed from high school hives by twenties and by twenty-fives, all eager for to try their wings and eke the sharpness of their stings? We do not know where they have gone, but this we know, when years are flown, and gristle hardened into bone, when they're ground smooth where life's wheels whirr, they will be what they thought they were. Meanwhile they help to give us pep, with this old world to keep in step. If I my weight of years could shake, another trip through life to take, I would not start where life began nor be a boy with cheek of tan, a-wearing father's cut down clothes with big stone bruises on my toes: but I would choose a later date and be a fresh young graduate.

Rude Rural Rhymes

In Praise of Plumbing

I sing the bathtub and its uses, its soap and suds and cleansing-juices. How dear to my heart is its porcelain lining when Hannah has scrubbed it all clean and all shining, with nowhere upon it a circle of dark, some bather has left for a high water mark. How dear to my heart is the hot water faucet, the rack and the towels that spread out across it. I stand awhile on one foot, first, just while the suds are at their worst, then teeter 'round upon the other to rest and cool its par-boiled brother. As soon as I can stand the heat, I put in both my size-ten feet. The water still is over hot; I step about before I squat, in hopes to find a cooler spot, and waiting yet another minute, I gingerly settle the rest of me in it. When I was young we had no tubs in which to take our weekly scrubs. If pa would bathe he had to pitch in and pack some water to the kitchen. When that was hot, he called for Bub to rustle up a laundry tub. And there, with lather overlaid, cold kitchen drafts upon him played. Some folks keep warm with fat and loose flesh, but pa was thin and ran to goose flesh. He sprung the door a cautious crack; his deep bass voice rang through the shack and called for ma to wash his back. Then slipping in the soapy juice, he fell and jarred his backbone loose. O we have griefs and more are coming, but glory be for modern plumbing. Our lives of weal and woe are mixtures, but we have all the modern fixtures.

Rude Rural Rhymes

A Seed-Time Song

Sweet spring has come, her days are fair, her bluebirds flutter in the air. The noonday sun upon my lid is shining hotter than it did. The blood of some ancestral gypsy is making me a little tipsy. Spring tickles me and makes me teeter, let's change to some more jazzy meter. Spring is the time to sharpen up the steel hoes, rub up the rakes and oil up the wheel hoes. I want to garden when I see the neighbors, digging in the dirt and singing at their labors; old blue jeans and straw hat thatches, loosening the loam in old potato patches. I can kick a spade in spite of my bunions, I'll raise some beets, I'll raise some onions. I can work a hoe, in spite of my blisters, in among the corn and the pole bean twisters. I'll make a dollar if I make a nickel, coaxing along a cucumber pickle. Stirring up the soil is good for rheumatics, good for your liver, your lights and lymphatics. Even supposing that every crop fails you, still the old garden is good for what ails you.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Ad On The Fence

I love my country's rocks and rills
and feign would move from off her
hills the billboard ads for liver pills.
I love to gaze on some old barn that
stands by wood or rock or tarn. I
love its curves and graceful lines, its
weathered boards from oaks and
pines. I love its silo, cribs and mows,
its Plymouth Rocks and brindle cows:
my farm-born heart with pleasure
swells when I inhale its rich, ripe
smells. But O I hate to see its back,
exposed to road or railway track, in
glaring paint give doubtful dope on
some one's double-action soap, or urge
relief from human ills by chewing six-
teen-horsepower pills. Around yon
curve the engine scoots, and wayworn
travelers press their snoots against
the dusty window-panes, while tired
eyes and weary brains drink in the
peace of hills and plains. Forgetting
cares and lack of cash, they gaze on
fields of succotash. Green growing
groves where dryads roost and bab-
bling brooks their spirits boost. To
keep these haunts for nymphs and
Pan, the bilious billboard let us ban.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Heritage

I dwell in town, for me no more stretch woods and fields the house before. Across the street, to side and rear, the homes of other men press near. Yet, come cold winds and colder rain and snow and shortened days again, to rural thoughts my mind goes back; I want a Farmers' Almanac, with longing strange, compelling, mystic, and doubtless partly atavistic. Old Bay State sires urge, "Take it from us the one you want is good old Thomas." New Hampshire answers, "We'll not hev it, now look here, son, you get a Leavitt." And thus distracted, nothing loath, I compromise and buy them both. Then first I scan above each date quaint pictures, old, appropriate; in Thomas see Sol's classic track, the twelve signs of the zodiac; while Leavitt limns field work and chores, the loaded wain, the lusty mowers. I shun the cold months next the cover and other chill days further over, but linger most where summer's charm lies light and sweet on wood and farm. I heed no more the winter storm; my days of June are "fair and warm." I hear the drip of summer showers, I feel the heat of noonday hours; in rest and labor, rain and shine, my fathers' life once more is mine. New Hampshire trusts to Leavitt's promise while Massachusetts cleaves to Thomas, and so their son, a hybrid growth, is well content to swear by both, no strain upon the double tether since both sing sun and growing weather.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Anti-Fat

If more of fat than lean and bone is found along your central zone, and you admit within your soul, if you should fall, that you would roll, think less of victuals, less of quiet and more of exercise and diet. Let me advise. in due proportions, the morning Walter Camp contortions. I've taught my uncle, aunt and cousin to take each day their Daily Dozen. But, as the old hymn says of heaven, no other rule than this is given, that you must fight if you would win, deny yourself if you'd be thin; cut out the sugar, starch and fat, the punkin pie and things like that. O brothers in this noble cause, pray work your limbs and not your jaws. O bald-head boys once young and nifty, who now are forty-odd and fifty, you should have gardens growing thrifty. Peel off your coats and prove your worth; cut off the inches from your girth by planting murphies in the earth. To give the work your system needs, between the rows, sprout harmful weeds. Go get a hoe and roughly treat them; raise lots of spuds, but do not eat them. Great is the hoe and great its use to all fat men who would reduce. So grab the same and swing it thusly among the rag-weed and the pusley.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Show Your Colors

The autos glide on streets and strands the Henries and the other brands. Of these machines I meet a host, and though I dodge as spry as most, I often rise from where I'm flung with bitter words upon my tongue, and having dusted off my clothes once more to Congress I propose some colored tags to show who drives that men may flee and save their lives, tags uniform for all the nation and furnishing some indication of what we may expect to meet when folks come tooting up the street. The driver with his first machine shall sport a license tag of green. When he has hit and maimed a few we'll change the same to black and blue, while he who leaves a victim dead henceforth shall wear a tag of red. But O, the lad who drives aright, is safe and sane and eke polite shall earn a number plate of white. And when at last he sprouts his wings, to welcome him from earthly things a shining angel crew shall hem the walls of new Jerusalem. Right careful of his Lizzie's rim, lest he should bump the cherubim, he'll flivver up the golden street and shake the hand of good Saint Pete.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Tested Herd

This is the farmer who said "By darn, I'll build me a big red dairy barn." These are the black and white tested cows that stand in the stable beneath the mows, on the farm of the farmer whose big red barn is the starting point of all this yarn. These are the kiddies as fine as silk, because they drink so much of the milk that comes from the black and white tested cows, that stand in the stable beneath the mows, on the farm of the farmer who builded a place for the foster-mothers of all the race. These are the carrots and beets and beans which furnish some more of the vitamins, to help raise kiddies as fine as silk who drink, each one, a quart of the milk, that daily comes from the tested cows, that stand in the stable beneath the mows, on the farm of the public benefactor who has rid his herd of the last reactor.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Man Needs Them Still

The hired men between their chews had stopped and spat and aired their views where listening cows could hear the news. So Jersey Jane nudged Guernsey Ann, shifted her cud and thus began. "I hear that Henry Ford allows that he can make some flivver cows, and since he never works by halves, no doubt some motorcycle calves. Do you believe, good sister Ann, that we shall lose our use to man? Is our long history complete, and will they make us into meat?" Said Guernsey Ann to Jersey Jane. "I share your fears, I share your pain." To hold his peace no longer able, thus spake old Dobbin from his stable: "O pray excuse this horse laugh grinny, but wouldn't Lizzie's milk be tinny? It makes me smile, it makes me snicker, it makes me whinny, neign and nicker. Your dams have known the herdsman's care since Eve was young and Eden fair. You topped with cream man's coffee cup ere good old Hector was a pup, and folks won't risk their lights and livers by drinking milk that comes from flivvers. So Jane and Ann pray cease to weep, swallow your cuds and go to sleep. You still shall serve your human lords in spite of fifty Henry Fords."

Rude Rural Rhymes

Swat Them Now

Helena Hicks is witty and wise with adequate muscles and accurate eyes, adapted for spotting and swatting the flies. When any youth a partner picks he'd better marry Helena Hicks than almost any other six. This bard is old and bald and wary, of all strange drinking water scary, since first ne heard of Typhoid Mary; but what avails his constant care when flies are swarming everywhere? When, in the good old summer time, which singers sing and rhymers rhyme, he sits at peace with all mankind, with nothing much upon his mind and very little on his skin, those blamed invertebrates begin. They come from stables and from worse to boost the business of the hearse. They come from garbage heaps and such, defiling everything they touch, with germs to slay our wives and widdies, our grandads and our pretty kiddies. Yea, many men have chills and itch, have glanders, pip and limbs that twitch, and many little children die, because we fail to swat the fly. Let's smite the critter for his sins, his wives, his triplets and his twins, his relatives by scores and dozens, his sons-in-law and second cousins.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Fast Time

O in the good old pre-war days,
which all sane men delight to praise,
when Phoebus chased away the dark,
the farmer rose as did the lark. Since
legislative Jabberwocks began to tink-
er with the clocks and strive, like
Joshua, at will to move the sun or
hold it still, he now must rise ere
peeps are heard from any self-respect-
ing bird. The gent who brings fresh
milk to me was wont to start for town
at three. To pail that milk for you and
John, he had to quit the hay at one.
In his snug bed he might not tarry for
fear of kicks from Dick and Harry.
But now in summer, spring and fall
the milk man never sleeps at all, for
when he takes the townward track he
meets himself just coming back. We
view old Sol with grave alarm when
summer days are overwarm, but when
we ask what time it is, that pie-faced
planet is a whiz. I'll tell the world the
job is his. And so I dedicate a rhyme
to this here daylight slaving time.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Melancholy Days

The melancholy days have come—
I'll say they're melancholy in that
dame's house whose worthless spouse
provides green wood, by golly. Just
such a cuss is neighbor Jim; it is not
lack of time with him, but mostly laz-
iness and whim. Oft on the bench
which stands before the well-known
village general store, so ordered as to
balance best, he brings his loose-hung
frame to rest, and there instead of
sawing wood, he gives advice for
Harding's good. O on the hills and on
the mountains, by busy brooks and
fizzy fountains, a lot of pines, a
bunch of oaks, await our rough and
ready strokes and all are crammed,
both trunk and limb, with exercise for
me an Jim. Let's chop them up for
Kate and Prue, then dry them out a
year or two. For if it were my lot in
life to cut the kindling as Jim's wife
I often think that I would pick an ex-
tra knobby, gnarly stick, then softly
seek that loafer's frame intent to
bean him with the same.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Descent of Man

I point with pride to that old monkey who sired the human race, by hunky. A faulty race both then and now, yet even pessimists allow he started something anyhow. When man first slid down from the trees, sloughed off his tail, unkinked his knees, forsook his safe old forest seat and stood straight up on his hind feet, he was a homely husky dub who scorned the weekly cleansing tub and ruled his soul-mate with a club. And when she talked of rights, I wēen, he did not fuss nor make a scene but bounced big boulders off her bean. That female of the species bluff, he called it quick and called it rough. He let his hair and whiskers sprout, save when some rival yanked them out. He ate raw meat both hair and hide, then crunched the bones for fat inside. We view this caveman with disgust when his rude manners are discussed. In age, in middle life and youth, his roughneck ways were most uncouth. Yet what we think of that old cuss our sons will doubtless think of us. Give me the man whose tools had stoneheads instead of certain modern boneheads. Sleek citizens who fail to vote, buy bootleg booze or rock the boat.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Johnny Appleseed

I'll write, that he who runs may read, a rhyme of Johnny Appleseed. Men called him cracked, his ways were quaint, he was a hero and a saint. His praise the heavenly chorus sings while all the angels flap their wings. He left the town, the beaten track, with apple seeds upon his back, and where he saw a likely site he planted them to left and right; then lying on the ground at night he thought of more unselfish schemes and planted apples in his dreams. May Heaven send for modern need more men like Johnny Appleseed. He ate each day one fruit or more but never threw away the core. The seeds he rescued from his jaw, blessed later generations he never saw, and not a tree he ever stuck bore fruit that he would ever pluck, but when our fathers emigrated they found young orchards ready planted. What though your work men never know and credit it to me or Joe, let's do our darndest here below. I too will twang the lyre again to benefit my fellow-men. I too will rise and write some rhymes that folks may grin in these hard times. And when discouraged, stumped and treed, I'll think of Johnny Appleseed.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Sweet Spring

Sweet spring has come, the peep frogs peep; I hear the critters in my sleep. For some are thin with voices shrill while others hoarser music spill. One fellow yawns "ho hum, ho hum"; another answers "jug o' rum." Sweet spring has come, her raindrops thud to reinforce the juicy mud and swell the freshet to a flood. The buds have shed their winter coats, the pretty birdies feel their oats and pour sweet music from their throats. Sweet spring has come, the young man's fancy is fluttering from Jane to Nancy, while his new tie, with wide stripes o'er it, is louder than the one before it, His girl in new spring style appears, with less of legs and more of ears. A dream is her new Easter bonnet; a nightmare was the price tag on it. Sweet spring has come yet winds are bitey; I wish I'd kept my winter nighty. By day the zephyrs hit my knees just where the Boston garters squeeze, between my socks and B. V. D's. I've shed too soon my winter flannels; my blood is frozen in its channels.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Water's Fine

This bard though bald, is fairly slim; his years are not yet hurting him, but youth recedes from day to day and boyhood scenes seem far away. Already dimmer through the haze shine memories of the good old days, and other kids both plump and slim possess the creek he used to swim. By their free masonry the boys, e'en at their books, foretaste its joys. Two fingers raised (or is it three?) mean "After school come swim with me." In frantic haste their shirts they shuck, their britches from their legs they pluck, yet pause awhile before they duck; for one and all the little scamps, before they brave the chilly damps, perform the rite that wards off cramps. O bare brown limbs sun-health imbibing! O boyhood joys beyond describing! Come, comrades of the good old times, and all old boys who read these rhymes; shuck off the cares that vex the soul, let middle age from off you roll and join me at the swimming hole. Why should we pause because we're bigger? "Last one in's a red-head nigger." Forget your years e'en though you've got 'em; "Bet you I can bring up bottom." "Gosh, old Fatty you look queer." "So deep, Skinny, lookahere."

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Other Fellow's Sins

Though not in sooth a guide to youth, I do, by contrast, shine, since other jays have tricks and ways a blame sight worse than mine. If Bill Smith's pipe is rank and ripe and stinks when it's on fire, while my cigar is milder far, Bill ought to chuck his briar. I boost no sales of coffin nails, or loose or ready rolled, so want the state to legislate that they shall not be sold. If cigarettes were my best bets, I'd advocate some laws to slam the guys who exercise with quids between their jaws. I'm wrong at that, my head is fat; I ought to have more sense, and my own faults should give me jolts not those of other gents. At his own sins a fellow grins but frowns on those of others. If he were wise he'd sympathise, and help his erring brothers. Though Peter Reese steals only geese, that man he should not scorn, who finds a use for all that's loose in feather, hair or horn. If every gink would stop and think, ere he bawled out his neighbor, he'd save, I wot, his strength a lot to use in gainful labor.

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Rude Rural Rhymes

The New Year's Sun

I send the joyful message forth that
good old Sol is coming north. He
paused upon his southward track, I
gather from the almanac, then slowly,
surely started back. O soon he'll quit
those far off geezers, the southern
zone Antipodesers, and they in turn
will be the freezers. But though he
leave the gents forlorn who cluster
south of Capricorn, I trust this
thought may ease their pain, that
southern loss is northern gain; and
none should scowl or knit his brow,
for they have got their innings now.
While here we wither with pneumon-
ia, sweet summer sings Patagonia.
While we have snow and ice all over,
New Zealand lies knee-deep in clover.
They're picking peaches in Tasmania
while frost is frizzling Pennsylvania.
With last year's resolutions rusted,
some rules of conduct we have busted,
but since the sun has made the turn
our souls with high resolve should
burn, Let's shake, December thirty-
first, besetting sins with which we're
cursed, and ere we seek our cots and
couches, cut out our meanness and our
grouches.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Irrigate Your Eden

Believe me if all those endearing young charms, possessed by your fair spouse, are going to stay, you'll have to pay for water in the house. There's a long, long trail a-winding down to the farm yard pump, and if you make her travel it you are a selfish chump. "Drink to me only with thine eyes" is very fine to sing, but in the use of household juice, it doesn't mean a thing. To hew the wood that cooks the food and then to tote the water, it is not fair to make the share of mother, wife or daughter. O in the Suane river and between the Wabash banks, a lot of water runs to waste that we might store in tanks, while many wives have up and died, and others wanted to, because they had no pipes of lead with water gurgling through. Silver threads among the gold, the passing years will send; don't hasten them—have iron pipes with spigots in the end.

Rude Rural Rhymes

A Shirtsleeves Song

By those who rules of conduct
quote, I'm told a man must keep his
coat, e'en though the hotness get his
goat. O, when the sun pours torrid
heats upon the houses and the streets
and when the women, lovely dears,
are keeping cool except their ears,
with nice silk stockings on each
frame, and other clothes I may not
name, with little waist and still less
skirt; why should I fear to show my
shirt? When summer simmers hot as
Hades, let's take a tip from those wise
ladies. O, on the farm where I was
born we took no thought for custom's
scorn, and when we found our bodies
wet with perspiration or with sweat, I
will confess, e'en though it hurts, we
peeled right down to undershirts. Yea,
when we saw the heat waves dance,
we often longed to shuck our pants.
With no one but ourselves to please,
we should have worked in B. V. D's.
And still, when things grow hot as
Tophet, I'm bound to grab my coat
and doff it. My old blue shirt is clean
and neat, my stout suspenders can't
be beat. With half my buttons in their
places, why should I wish to hide my
braces? When northern zones have
tropic heats, when Sol unclouded on
us beats, that outer garment I shall
dump it; if folks don't like it they can
lump it.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Standing Broad Grin

The leaves were down, the trees were bare, like my smooth crown bereft of hair. My pen was poor, my ink was pale, my muse was chilled by autumn's gale, and warned by brisk November breezes, I'd shed long since my B. V. Deezees. I sat beside the kitchen stove and thought with rueful soul how many Rural Rhymes it takes to buy a ton of coal. The shades of night were falling fast when through the town some boy scouts passed, their banner bearing words like these, "Smile a little wider please". O friends for you and me, I wis, a needed lesson lies in this, and we might well adopt, I wot, the motto which those lads have got. I have a very homely mug which looks its worst when shut up snug, but I am always at my best with mouth spread out from east to west. Why should I make my troubles known, when other gents have got their own and have no respite or relief from fifty-seven kinds of grief. To all my gloom I've tied a can, I'll grin like Happy Hooligan. No more shall worry keep me slim; I'm waxing fat like Sunny Jim. O join wth me, this lesson seize, and smile a little wider please.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Winter Woes

Of all the ills with which I'm
cursed the winter furnace is the
worst. On balmy days it rolls up
heat, but balks on days of cold and
sleet. And ever when my wife com-
plains I do not take sufficient pains
nor use my substitute for brains,
once more the furnace mouth I stoke,
once more the iron bar I poke among
the cinders, ash and coke. I bend my
frame at its equator and operate the
agitator. I get the ash 'tis very true,
but half the fire comes following
through. Then when my strength is
quite expended, I find the grate is end-
for-ended. There's nothing in the
world to do but clean it out and start
anew. In vain my weary eyes I raise
no snappy kindling meets my gaze.
Jim Jones, from whom I ordered wood,
has failed to function as he should.
That cussed furnace is the reason I so
lament the vanished season when
every gent had B. V. D's on, when
summer birdies lifted lilts and folks
could sleep without the quilts.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Corn

From southern vales the corn plant
came, from lands of gold and Aztec
fame, where long it held an honored
place in gardens of a vanished race.
With gleeful grins the seed we drop,
with honest pride we pick the crop,
the flint and dent, the sweet and pop.
Dame Nature formed it long ago, a
giant grass in Mexico. From tribe to
tribe the gift was passed. It reached
our northern land at last, to serve
the early settlers' need, a sturdy staff
of life indeed; to swell with grain the
Yankee cribs and pad with fat their
lanky ribs. Still on our tables it ap-
pears, and in the form of roasting ears,
against our rugged features pressed,
it spreads them out from east to west.
A noble food, but what a pity the way
we eat it is not pretty. We gnaw it off
in gulps and gobs, and on our plates
we pile the cobs. Between the ears we
hardly pause to wipe the butter from
our jaws. When sweet corn yearly .
waves its banners we give vacations
to our manners.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Catalog Time

Where now the winds of March are blowing the garden sass will soon be growing. My muse shall sing man's yearly need for onion sets and spinach seed, shall sing likewise that gay deceiver which stimulates our garden fever, the subtle seedman's catalog whose charms our better judgment fog. Its pictured beets and peas and chard were never grown in my back yard. My radishes are not so red, my punkins not so widely spread, my lettuces refuse to head. The seedsman is an optimist and loves the brighter side I wist. He does not show in colored ed plate the wooly worms that lie in wait. No darkbrown spots like mine are seen on his prolific greenpod bean. And yet, for planting all agog, I love that yearly catalog. I hail with joy each harmless fable and plant new squashes for my table. For though my cukes be bitter things, my cabbage full of worms, by jings, and ali my snap beans full of strings, still to my heart the brown earth calls, and all her summers, springs and falls shall find my legs in overalls; shall find me spading loam and sand with seven blisters on each hand.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Peaches or Pines

O woodman spare that tree, refrain
from further hacks and do not swing
and sling so free yon double-bitted ax,
but lend a listening ear to me and let
your arm relax. Our wood supply is
growing scant—we should not chop
unless we plant. Ere to Saint Peter's
choir I've risen to blend my deep bass
voice with hisn, to thumb and strum
both flat and sharp on one sizeten
left-handed harp—ere this, I say, has
come to pass, I'll scratch around in
leaves and grass to find an oak or
maple seed, and having stuck it in the
mead and covered it with loam and
muck, in later years with any luck, I'll
have a tree beneath whose boughs the
woodchucks and the goats may
browse. "What does he plant who
plants a tree?" the poet asks of you
and me. He plants a hope of future
good in shade and beauty, fruit or
wood. So here and there tree seeds
I'll place to benefit the human race.
Posterity shall view those trees and
pay me compliments like these. "In all
his verse together tossed, that Rural
Rhymer was a frost; we're good and
glad his works are lost. But as a for-
estation factor the 'bonehead was a
right good actor, in fact a blooming
benefactor."

Rude Rural Rhymes

A Song of the Sock

My friend and neighbor, Thomas Cox, is very hard upon his socks, for be they strongly knit or phony ne punctures them with Trilbies bony. Though oft his wife darns them and him, they will not stay in proper trim, but every night some pink will show through some new rent in heel or toe. When I was young and unbespoken, and not yet wed and halter broken, I too had often holey socks, and so I sympathize with Cox. For at the store new brogans trying I found it very mortifying. With one good foot, to save my soul, I could not tell which sock was whole. I racked my brain with much ado, but never pulled the proper shoe; and gazing on my shrinking skin the clerks and customers would grin. No longer worried as before, I seek with pride the general store and kick both shoes across the floor; for I am wed to Hannah Jane and both my socks are safe and sane. So all day long I sing her praises, and fresh shoe clerks can go to blazes. Yea when she reads this Rural Rhyme, she'll feed me well at dinner time; my stockings extra smooth she'll keep and bake a cake three layers deep.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Hair Tonic

I hear that milk and garden greens
have snappy things called vitamins
that give us health and strength and
pep and put the ginger in our step,
but what is this I also hear from
folks who ought to know that vita-
mines will help to make our hair and
whiskers grow. I find my Jove-like
dome of thought of shade not quite
bereft. I'll use this happy hunch and
keep what herbage I have left. The
razor makes a daily trip along my
chin and jowls and lip, so by my wife
it is not feared that I will ever raise
a beard or whiskers like a Bolshevik;
but O I want my hair to stick. Upon
my brain pan flies would crawl if I
should sport no hair at all, and those
that lit upon my head would have to
wear a non-skid tread. They'd slip and
slither on my scalp like mountain
climbers on an Alp. To ward them off
my hair I'll keep though I chew lettuce
in my sleep. To nourish bristles on
my brow I'll buy myself a mooley cow.
If milk and vegetables clinch the
thatch upon our beans, so help me
Pete but I will eat a lot of spinach
greens.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Rooster

The rooster is a lusty bird; in all the land his voice is heard, a proud and haughty bird by heck who flaps his wings and curves his neck. From east to west, from perch and pole, his morning bugle echoes roll, arousing men from snoring deep and maidens from their beauty sleep. He hunts for worms with main and might, and finding one, with huge delight, to whet his harem's appetite, he calls his wives with trill and hum, then—humor great but manners bum—he eats it up before they come. Now, whether Red or Plymouth Rock, one half is he of all the flock, and chickens mostly favor dad in qualities both good and bad. But when the hatching season's over, we must restrain this gallant rover, must shut him up in lonely state and keep the layers celibate. Their eggs will thus repay our toil when fertile ones would quickly spoil. The man who'd be a fresh egg booster must segregate that old he-rooster.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Keep The Home Flowers Blooming

The rose has reds the violet blues
and other flowers have other hues.
When all without is storm and gloom,
I love the brightness of a room lit by
a red geranium bloom. Sweet summer
comes and brings some phlox some
Bouncing Betts and hollyhocks. The
rose is red and on its head fall gently
rain and dew, no home, though neat,
is quite complete without a bush or
two. The rose is red the violet blue
whenever spring comes back; he
starves his soul who does not have
some flowers 'round his shack. The
farmer tills on vales and hills food
crops his fathers knew, but let him
raise by walks and ways his mother's
posies too. We give him praise who
spends his days with Ceres not with
Mammon, and with her grain from
hill and plain puts fat the porker's ham
on; but let him steal an hour to feel
the love of gentle Flora, upon his
knees to plant sweet peas for wife or
Sister Dora.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Your Editor Speaks

We love this town, there's nothing like it, however far and wide we hike it. We're glad we came, we gladly linger and sling the type with skillful finger. Our feet and heart are over-size; with weal or woe we sympathize. We're tickled as that budding Beecher when church folks raise the local preacher. From Jimmy Smith's first wailing breath to when his eyes are closed in death, there's scarce a word or work or caper but interests the local paper. The member of the Ladies' Aid by whom the first prize pie is made, we're good and glad to celebrate her, and, if unwed, thus help to date her. Each doubting Thomas to convince, we give her recipe for mince, and say our teeth have never sunk in a pie so pleasing as her punk-in. When Minnie finds her latest pet as good as she will likely get, we print kind words about the wedding, e'en though we fear they'll have hard sledding, felicitate the bride and groom and hope to see the birthrate boom. We want the news but want the best; we censor some and print the rest. Send in the facts and keep them coming, we like them fresh and hot and humming. Send in the news but search your heart; be sure it holds no poisoned dart. In all the land there is no cuss so mean as old Anonymous. We go each night in peace to roost if we have done our daily boost; but nightmares come to fright and shock for every mean and measly knock.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Garlic

Our garden crops have come from far where other climes and peoples are. From mountain valleys of Peru the snappy snap bean comes to you. In Mexico sprang Indian corn, in India the cuke was born. The cabbage hails from Europe's sea land, hot weather spinach from New Zealand. But there's one peppery garden plant we natives mostly do not want. When long of yore its fumes arose and helped to shape the Roman nose, a favored food was garlic then for fighting fowls and fighting men. They mixed it with the warrior's hash and with the rooster's morning mash. It kept the legions primed for war till fear of Rome spread near and far, and doubtless made game fighting cocks of pacifistic Plymouth Rocks. A shrinking rabbit fed up thus would lick a hippopotamus. Hence sprang old tales of sudden death from dragons slaying with their breath.

Rude Rural Rhymes

So, Bossy, So

O there are many breeds of kine,
the Shorthorn coarse, the Jersey fine,
the black and white of ancient line,
as well as scrub or garden cows that
on our rugged hillsides browse. On
weeds and grass and leaves of trees,
they ruminate upon their knees, and
thus extract the vitamines from forty
different kinds of greens. I oft have
sung, I sing again the uses of fresh
milk to men. To hymn its praise I
never tire; my thumb is ever on my
lyre. I learned its use when very
young; it suits my palate and my
tongue. I drink a pint from time to
time, then straighway write a Rural
Rhyme. We need some vitamines each
day; they help us work; they help us
play. Had we four stomachs like the
kine, we too on foliage might dine, on
daisy, dock and buttercup, we too
might breakfast, lunch and sup, and
thus obtain the A's and B's and other
vitamines like these. But since we
have one tummy each and bulky
foods are out of reach, let's keep
good cows upon the land, the Guern-
sey or some other brand, and get our
clover second hand.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Biddy Protests

"I celebrate the good old days when no one checked up on our lays. These modern methods make me sick," thus spake old Biddy Dominick. "We laid to please ourselves you bet, folks took what fresh eggs they could get. We were not kept a narrow yard in but wandered freely through the garden: for every hen and every chicken had all out doors to scratch and pick in, and as we ambled here and there of every crop we took our share. Although we roosted oft in trees and shivered in the midnight breeze, no sane man looked for winter eggs nor watched the color of our legs. We slept at night like Christian folks and had no wish to make more yolks; but now we stay up half the night and lay our eggs by Mazda light. If I should go too soon to slumber some watchful gent would take my number. Of proper privacy divested, we're caught and pinched and weighed and tested. This culling business I protest; I'm growing old, I want to rest, but I must still perform as rated or have my old head amputated. If I myself escape the block, some friends are missing from the flock and when the honeymoon is over, they seize and execute my lover; yea when the hatching season's done they swat my husband and my son."

Rude Rural Rhymes

Cheese

On wintry nights and rainy days I often sit beside the blaze and Hannah, while I toast my shins, will read to me some bulletins. Among instructive college prints, there's none more full of helpful hints than that which tells us forty ways to use the cheeses and the wheys, each one of which deserves our praise. Before I heard that treatise wise I filled myself with meat and pies, with four boiled eggs and things like these, and then I ate a hunk of cheese. I had the stomachache all night, and nightmares came my soul to fright. I tossed about with grief and groans, while all the neighbors heard my moans. From this good bulletin I learn, that when for cheese our bosoms yearn, we should not first take all that comes, then add the cheese to full-fed tums but we should think of it as meat, and use discretion when we eat. For this my gratitude is deep; I wisely dine, then sweetly sleep, no more I thrash around and weep. Instead of ghosts and specters grim, I dream of saints and seraphim. In loaf or casserole or rabbit, the use of cheese is now a habit. No book of poems brings me bliss to equal bulletins like this.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Truth and Tombstones

When through the quiet fields I go
where side by side sleep high and low,
I seldom see an epitaph which tells
the truth or even half. If we could sift
the wheat from chaff, if pious lies no
more were read but only bitter truth
instead, with little left to soothe and
please, some stones would tell us facts
like these: "Poor Mary Jones lies in
this tomb, she pushed too far a heavy
broom. Her husband grieves, his sor-
row deeper because he bought no car-
pet sweeper." "In memory of Hetty
Burke who died of general overwork.
Her husband finds it much more both-
er to save one wife than get another.
He'll not be long a widowed weeper,
hired help is dear but wives are
cheaper." "Here Susan Smith has rest
at last, too many children came too
fast." "Here lies the wife of Hapgood
Hicks who did the weekly wash for
six. She's glad to rest beneath these
sods; she carried water seven rods."
Life's burdens should be justly shar-
ed. Some husbands could be better
spared than wives for whom these
stones were squared. Dry-eyed we'd
plant those selfish coots and leave
them there till Gabriel toots.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Apple Cure

To regulate the human gizzard and all man's frame from A to izzard, the good red apple is a wizard. When Mother Eva picked her lunch I'll say she had the proper lunch. The one she ate she found a seed in, and having sneaked it out of Eden, she planted it and so I wist became the first pomologist, and put one over on her pardner who thought himself the only gardener. To eat each day a juicy pome will keep the doctor from your home, so shed your nightshirt, rise betimes, and pick yourself a Golden Grimes. No more I ween will old Doc Green come ramping up in his machine all set to amputate my spleen. No more he'll jab, with hand expert, to find the spots he knows will hurt. No longer overwork his brain and all its fine ball-bearings strain, determining a diagnosis before he tells me what the dose is. Instead of pills of varied size I'm eating Winesaps, Yorks and Spies. And you I hope will follow suit and fill yourself with wholesome fruit.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Name Your Farm

If you possess a likely farm, chuck full of crops and cows and charm, you ought to give a name to it, like "Harvest Hills" or "Bodger's Bit." And yet, I pray you, do not choose the common names that others use, the "Hilltop Farms" and "Valley Views," lest, when you stamp the same some day, on cheese or prunes or hops or hay, the Patent Office man may say: "Lay off that name, for it appears, in Podunk, Maine, John Henry Squeers has used it umpty-seven years." So work your brains and let them wander in search of new names here and yonder, through tales and myths and old traditions that fit your farm and its conditions. From Palestine and Greece and Rome, bring poetry and romance home. If you have oaks try "Druid Grove" or some neat reference to Jove. If you raise mules, like my friend Bill, you might do worse than "Balaam Hill." Yea, if the job were wished on me to say what each farm's name should be, my choice would fit at any rate, but might be too appropriate. For you and I and all men know some farms that should be "Housewife's Woe," and proud possessors would not swallow my "Hopeless Hill" or "Slipshod Hollow."

Rude Rural Rhymes

Old King Coal

This is the hungry furnace door
that eats up coal and calls for more.
This is the coal for eighteen bones,
so full of slate so full of stones, or
other grades for twenty plunks, but
likewise full of clinker chunks, that
go in through the furnace door and
leave it hungry as before. These are
the ashes dead and white to be scraped
out both morn and night. This is
the bard in these hard times who
spends his dollars and his dimes, ob-
tained by writing Rural Rhymes, for
bum black diamonds long on slate,
which sail in toward the furnace
grate and leave it still insatiate. This
is the shovel full of nicks with which
the bard performs his tricks and
puts in many weary licks; the poker
too and eke the shaker, which worry
that old rhyming faker till he says
words nor right nor wise for one who
hopes that, when he dies, he'll find in
Peter kindly feelings and have an end
of furnace dealings.

Rude Rural Rhymes

It Pays To Advertise

The little flowers by hill and dell
have learned their little lesson well.
They breathe sweet scents for bees
and flies because it pays to advertise.
The insect visitors that fall in 'or
light upon the edge and crawl in, the
butterflies and bugs and ants get pol-
len on their coats and pants, and
willy-nilly thus they share in every
floral love affair. If I had peach and
apple trees, I'd put the proper spray
on these, and when the fruit was red
and ripe I'd tell the world in good
plain type, so plain that they who ran
might read and buy the fruit their
children need. That ad, so neatly I
would phrase it that every dame and
gent would praise it. In long im-
patient lines they'd stand to buy the
Rural Rhymer brand. To keep their
lungs and livers right they'd chew my
apples day and night. A primrose
by the river's rim, plain primrose was
to me and Jim, and no one else had
greatly prized it until the poet adver-
tised it. The meanest flower that
grows I think might make a hit
through printer's ink.

Rude Rural Rhymes

A Rude Rural Valentine

The rose is red the violet blue, this Valentine is meant for you. The February days are classy, our good resolves are not yet brassy. The rose is red the lily white, some couples fall in love at sight; to bring some others into line requires a saint like Valentine, and not another month, I wot, a spiffy saint like him has got. The second month with him alone can well for lack of length atone. This is the month when lovers kiss and lie a little too I wis; for each will swear, then swear some more, that neither ever loved before. The rose is red the chestnut green, they spring some chestnuts too I ween. But though their vows be trite and old, no whiter lies are ever told, for she tells him and he tells her, not what they are but wish they were. So let them wander hand in hand and heart to heart in fairyland. I too will rise and thumb my lyre, I too will share their youthful fire. Yea, though my bald dome shiny is, and though you creak with rheumatiz, the rose is red the violet blue, love still has sweets for me and you.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Hairy Vetch

In the pleasant summer weather,
rye and vetch grew green together. A
boy came over hills and hollows saw
the vetch and spoke as follows: "Fun-
ny little purple pea, what can you do
for me? I see you twining in the rye,
where it stands head high; I see your
lacy leaves grow, pretty purple posies
blow, what's your use, I want to
know?" "My beauty would be some
excuse, had my vine no other use,
smiling at you from the rye as you
wander barefoot by. But I have other
uses; root nitrogen my best excuse is.
Plow us under and entomb us, rye and
I will give you humus. In your field or
garden plot, bury us and let us rot.
With a little longer stay, mowed in
June and stowed away, we make
mighty tasty hay. We grow well in
falls and springs; guess we have our
place, by jings, in the general scheme
of things." Once a better bard than I
wrote of coming through the rye. So I
make this rhyming sketch in honor of
rye's chum, the vetch.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Coffee

I speak the truth, I stand in sooth within a prophet's shoes; I dare to say that coffee has a kick almost like booze. From Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand, my fellow men pay francs and yen each for his favorite brand. It is a mighty stimulant, a habit forming drug, as potent as the erstwhile beer or cider from a jug. When this for evening drink I steep, I go to bed and do not sleep; when this for morning use I brew, I feel as young and fresh as you. Two hours or three I'm on the jump, but after that my feelings slump. It is not good for me at all, it irks my liver and my gall. Yet when to quit it I begin, I act as mean and cross as sin. I shun the cup for many a day then fall once more beneath its sway. Now, while my weakness I deplore, I think I'll take just one cup more. The flesh is weak and though I aim right soon to quit the coffee game, I hope they keep their pucker still, those sweating peasants of Brazil. I hope the Arab from his tent, a bumper coffee crop has sent, to carry with it everywhere its moratorium of care.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Do It Now

In doing work a choice of plan is free to any maid or man, to either labor when they ought to, or else to wait until they've got to. The latter method is the one by which most human tasks are done. If in the spring betimes I take, from off its nail a snag tooth rake, with ease I curry up the lawn, and burn the trash that lay thereon. If then I seize the waiting mower and drag it through the open door, that tool and I, like frolic friskers, slip o'er the lawn and trim its whiskers. While here and there I go a scooting, the weeds and grass fly scalahooting; in joyful haste the task is sped; the lawn is slick as buttered bread. But if I let the raking go, and let the dandelions grow, the mower clogs on hill and hummock; its handle jabs me in the stomach, and thus against my gizzard pressed, it knocks my temper galley west. O if I polish off the weeds, and leave some room for garden seeds, I soon have lettuce, onions, beets, and other classy garden eats; but this advice no merry josh is, where you grow weeds you can't grow squashes. Instead of dallying and chewing the needed tasks we should be doing. In skirt or shirt or waist or britches, a stitch in time saves lots of stitches. When death shall give us our quietus, well finished work in heaven will greet us, but jobs undone will rise to vex us and swat us in the solar plexus.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Household Budget

Before he traveled far in life Jim Henry Smith annexed a wife; then straightway loosened up his collar prepared to chase the nimble dollar. But all he earned his bride would spend; her wants and needs seemed without end. A nickel for a spool of thread and ten cents for a thimble and other things of higher price from Isenstein or Gimbel. In shopping trips she found delight. She searched Jim's trousers every night. There came a daughter, then a son, and they were dear more ways than one. For though he loved them bona fide, it cost to feed and clothe and didy. Smith's credit smashed to smithereens; he had no jitneys in his jeans. Then wiser grown, Jim Henry's spouse drew up a budget for her house, assigned her dollars, dimes and cents to balance income with expense, a lot for food, a bit for frills, for movies, church, and pale pink pills. So now she knows just where she's at, and Jim no more is busted flat. He walks the street in manly pride nor looks for duns from side to side. He pays each month the merchant's tallies and is not dodging through the allies.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Here Comes The Bride

This is the merry month of June which sets the wedding bells in tune, when men see those who soon will boss 'em all camouflaged with orange blossom. O blushing bride, O gentle dear, push back the tresses from your ear, I have some words for you to hear. When all mankind were troglodytes, before the dates that history cites, a female person had no rights. The bridegroom's plan for home sweet home was bending saplings on her dome. But times have changed since those beginnings and women long have had their innings. Since Satan made the rolling pin, the human head is all too thin. If Jason calls his soul his own, rap gently on his frontal bone, but bear in mind the tool is meant to stupefy, not crack or dent. From self assertion you must wean him, but do be careful when you bean him. I wish you luck, I hope you win, I'm very strong for discipline; but yet as oft as once a week, for him some freedom I bespeak, and you should give no wrathful sign, providing he is home by nine, nor bounce his head against a rafter for coming just a minute after. So, nobly just, but sternly great, step to the helm and navigate; you are the captain, he the mate. And when he tries back talk with you he'll soon be nothing but the crew. Nay more, if he a bit too far go, he may be classed as simply cargo.

Rude Rural Rhymes

He Feeds Us All

The farmer's tasks are never done:
He works two eight-hour days in one;
till daylight saving knocks him flat
by adding one more hour to that. In
certain years the crops won't grow,
when they do well the price is low; so
raising little, naught, or much, he's
very apt to get in Dutch. And when I
see him on the jump, I sometimes
think that he's a chump for raising
food that loafers eat; whose pants
wear only at the seat; then taking all
the market's chance, producing wool
to patch those pants. Of course, be-
sides those lazy folk who sidestep ev-
ery labor yoke, he feeds some worthy
people too, hard-working scouts like
me and you. If he should quit all
things would slump; I hope he still
stays on the jump; and I am filled
with gratitude for fifty-seven kinds
of food. Should need arise, so help
me Pete, I'd go and help him husk his
wheat.

Rude Rural Rhymes

The Community Newspaper

Of all the sheets from East to West
the local paper is the best. Deep is our
love and deep our debt to Record,
Journal or Gazette. When first I landed
on this ball, a bit of flesh wrapped
'round a squall, it welcomed me with
joy and pride my life has never justified.
It follows me my whole life
through, with words all kind and mostly true;
and even after I am hearsed
'twill tell my best and hide my worst.
When in Oshkosh or Wickiup I wander
homesick as a pup, or if in foreign
lands I roam, it brings me pleasant
news of home. Across the sands, across
the sea, the old home paper
comes to me. It is a friend both true
and tried, and to it, gents, I point
with pride; yea, I will hock my Sunday
pants to pay up six years in advance.

Rude Rural Rhymes

A Rural Book

The Bible is a rural book. From pastured hills the prophets look; the inspiration of their word, stern voices in the storm winds heard. When Heaven's light on Jacob shone his head was pillowed on a stone. The city no such vision yields; his ladder rested in the fields. Not yet a king, by wood and rock, Saul sought his father's straying stock. Young David watched the grazing sheep, the flock from wolves and bears to keep. With pebbles from a country brook, the great Philistine's life he took. All scripture heroes had their birth, where naked feet touch naked earth. And one there was, exceeding them, who walked Main Street in Bethlehem and kept with angel voices tryst; a small-town carpenter was Christ. He wrought no stately mansion's ribs but homely things like babies' cribs. We celebrate his natal day; and even cities own his sway, but still, as then, the fields rejoice and praise him with a clearer voice. No little village gave him death, no Bethany nor Nazareth. His words were words of life to them; men slew him in Jerusalem.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Feeding Father

We know the latest diet rules and raise the children by them; they keep ma slim and Susan plump, but father will not try them. Man wants but little here below nor wants that little long, but pa wants coffee thrice a day and wants that coffee strong. We know that fruits are good for pa, we steam them, boil them, bake them, we cook them fifty-seven ways but can't make father take them. We serve him eggs in many styles, we scramble, poach and beat them; they must be fried like tough raw hide, or father will not eat them. The healthful greens and stringless beans his palate do not tickle, but he will shout for sourkrout nine wienies and a pickle. He's busting all nutrition rules in spirit and in letter, he wants fried spuds three times a day, the greasier the better. If pa still stubbornly persists, Dame Nature's wrath to brave, we fear, by gum, that he will come to an untimely grave. Just how he'll fare when over there and what he'll chew we know not. How will he eat celestial meat without a soggy doughnut? Above the choir they'll hear our sire; above its loud hosanna, he'll criticize the lack of pies and kick about the manna.

Rude Rural Rhymes

Bill Quits

We view the farmer with alarm because he won't stay on the farm. He moves to town and there he lives, while here and yon his flivver flivs, and city papers wonder why he thus neglects our food supply. How can he tear him self away from smells of flowers and new mcwn hay? I tracked one rustic to his flat and begged of him, by this and that, to answer if he felt no shame, in spite of youth and stalwart frame to quit thus cold the farming game. "Nay, nay" quoth he, "by ding and dang, I suffer not a single pang. The crops I sold went cheap as dirt, I needed cash for baby's shirt, and for my wife's—that is to say—though South Sea belles wear suits of hay, my woman hates to dress that way." "But Bill" says I, "all men are brothers, you farmers ought to feed the others." "The world can feed itself" he said, and threw me out upon my head. Too husky he for me to fight, and anyway the cuss was right. Long laboring hours and meager gain this rural exodus explain.

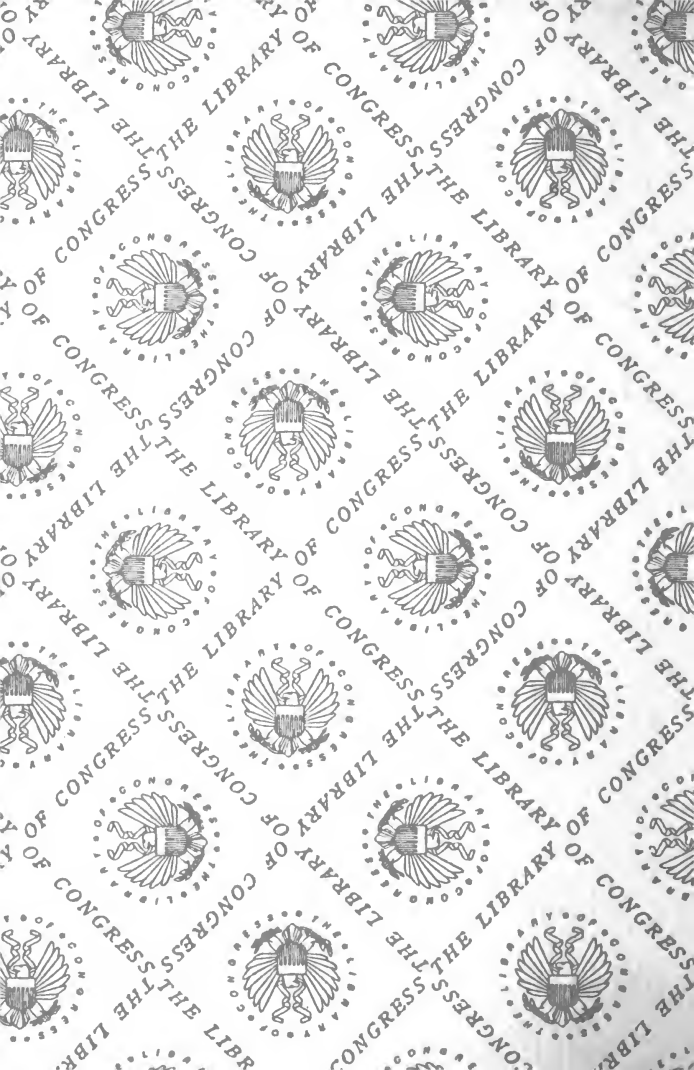
Rude Rural Rhymes

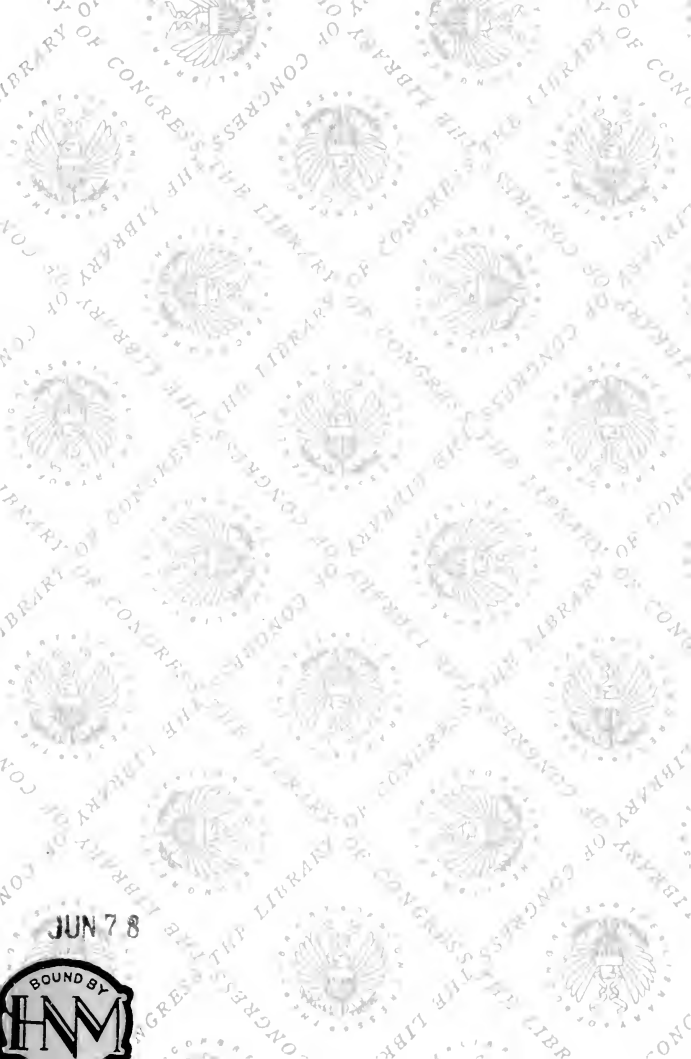
Dinner's Ready

Awake my muse, get going some;
for good Thanksgiving time has come,
with foods that please the human tum.
How dear to my heart is the Thanks-
giving bird when segregated from the
herd and served upon a platter fair
with drumsticks stuck up in the air.
For us he pipped his speckled shell
and wandered over hill and dell. He
hunted worms, he gulped them down;
he made good meat both white and
brown. For us the sprightly punkin
vines broke through the corn rows'
stiffer lines, set orange fruit with
golden meat and made pie-filling rich
and sweet. For us the biddies, white
and red, laid eggs in barn, garage and
shed, while cows ate dock and other
greens to fill their milk with vitamins.
I pity those dyspeptic jays with extra-
careful eating ways who do not like
Thanksgiving days, but hail with joy
the lad who's able ~~to~~ stretch his feet
beneath the table, and lodged in that
strategic place feed double rations to
his face.

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